

Anatomy of a Web Address

A Uniform Resource Locator -- URL -- is the unique address used to identify a Web site. It is similar to a home mailing address. It is often simply called a Web address and is, literally, the address of a file on the Internet.

Segments of a Web address

The following example URL is a Web page of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN). ICANN is an international nonprofit corporation assigned responsibility for overseeing the management of the Internet's domain name system (DNS).

<http://www.icann.org/general/links.htm> ~ *Here is the breakdown of components in this URL:*

- **http**: The protocol or computer language a computer must "speak" in order to retrieve this file. It stands for Hypertext Transfer Protocol. You never need to type http:// to access a Web site, however in some browsers and operating systems, just typing the name of a URL (the second-level domain) without the top-level domain automatically launches a search.
- **www**: The name of the host computer. www is the most common, but you will occasionally see others, such as dir.
- **icann**: The second-level domain. The second-level domain in conjunction with the top-level domain makes up the domain name that corresponds to a specific address.
- **org**: The top-level domain. There are currently 13 top-level domains available.
- **general**: A directory, or folder, containing Web pages.
- **links**: The name of the file, or specific Web page, to be retrieved.
- **htm**: The extension of the file, similar to .doc, the extension used for Word documents. Most Web pages contain the suffixes .htm or .html, but other extensions are becoming increasingly common.

Top level domains

Here are some of the top-level domain names now approved by ICANN.

- .com - commercial business
- .mil - U.S. military or affiliated agency
- .edu - educational institution (e.g., college)
- .net - large network
- .gov - U.S. governmental agency
- .org - U.S. nonprofit organization

Domains

You need to be proficient with the domains in a Web address. For example, the Web site for the White House is www.whitehouse.gov; it has the .gov extension since it is a government institution. The Web address www.whitehouse.net leads to a hoax site that deliberately has the look and feel of an official U.S. government site.